WRITING AND THE ANCIENT STATE

Writing and the Ancient State explores the early development of writing and its relationship to the growth of political structures. The first part of the book focuses on the contribution of writing to the state's legitimating project. The second part deals with the state's use of writing in administration, analyzing both textual and archaeological evidence to reconstruct how the state used bookkeeping to allocate land, police its people, and extract taxes from them. The third part focuses on education, the state's system for replenishing its staff of scribe officials. The first half of each part surveys evidence from Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Maya lowlands, Central Mexico, and the Andes; against this background the second half examines the evidence from China. The chief aim of this book is to shed new light on early China (from the second millennium B.C. through the end of the Han period, ca. A.D. 220) while bringing to bear the lens of cross-cultural analysis on each of the civilizations under discussion. The compiling of lists—lists of names, or of names and numbers—is a recurring theme throughout all three parts. A concluding chapter argues that there is nothing accidental about the pervasiveness of this theme: in both origin and function, early writing is almost synonymous with the listing of names.

Wang Haicheng is Mary and Cheney Cowles Endowed assistant professor in the School of Art at the University of Washington, Seattle. His research centers on the art and archaeology of ancient China and the comparative study of early civilizations. Recent and forthcoming publications include a book chapter on the material record of the Erligang civilization, a chapter on urbanization and writing in The Cambridge World History, and papers on calligraphy and the archaeology of agency. He has lectured widely in the United States and China.
WRITING AND THE ANCIENT STATE

Early China in Comparative Perspective

WANG HAICHENG
University of Washington
To my parents 王杰 and 林玉生
To my teachers 林梅村 and Robert Bagley

獨學而無友，則孤陋而寡聞。
Learning alone, without companions, makes one feel solitary, shallow, and ignorant.

Li ji “XUEJI”

I shall make you love writing more than your mother; I shall make its beauties be shown to you. Now, it is greater than any other profession. There is not its like in the land.

The Teaching of Khety, ancient Egyptian school text
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ABBREVIATIONS

ASAE     Annales du Service des Antiquités de l’Égypte
CAJ      Cambridge Archaeological Journal
CANE     Civilizations of the Ancient Near East. Jack M. Sasson, John Baines, Gary
CEO      Creating Economic Order: Record-Keeping, Standardization, and the Development
         of Accounting in the Ancient Near East. Michael Hudson and Cornelia
CHAC     The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to
         221 B.C. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.). Cambridge:     
CSSH     Comparative Studies in Society and History
EC       Early China
ECT      Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide. Michael Loewe (ed.). Berkeley,          
EE       Explorations in Ethnohistory: Indians of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century.
         H. R. Harvey and Hanns J. Prem (eds.). Albuquerque: University of New 
ETCSL    Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
FW       The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process. Stephen D. Houston
HC       The History of Cartography. J. B. Harley and David Woodward (eds.). 
IAS      The Inca and Aztec States 1400–1800: Anthropology and History. George A.
         Collier, Renato I. Rosaldo, and John D. Wirth (eds.). New York: Academic
JAOS     Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCS      Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEA      Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JESHO    Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
### Abbreviations

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<td>JFA</td>
<td>Journal of Field Archaeology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDAIK</td>
<td>Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Revue d’Assyriologie et d’Archéologie Orientale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZLW</td>
<td>Zhongguo lishi wenwu</td>
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WRITING AND THE ANCIENT STATE